Present
Mr Harvey McGrath (Chair).
Mr John Biggs, Dr Alex Colas, Professor Philip Dewe, Ms Annabel Jones, Professor David
Latchman, Mrs. Joy Manners, Mr Garth Pollard, Mr Paul Shelton, Professor Julian Swann, Dr
Ruth Thompson, Mr Peter Zinkin

In attendance
Mrs. Katharine Bock (Head of Governance), Mr Keith Harrison (Secretary and Clerk to the
Governors), Mr David McGhie (Director of Planning), Ms Roisin Lynch (Corporate
Support Intern).

Apologies for absence
Ms Julia Collins, Mr Hugh Ferrand, Dr Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, Professor John Kelly, Ms Liz
Meek, Mr John Poggioli, Mr Sean Rillo Raczka

4 WELCOME TO NEW GOVERNOR
4.1 The Committee welcomed Peter Zinkin to his first meeting as a Birkbeck Governor.

5 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
Noted
5.1 Governors were asked to disclose in advance any actual or potential conflicts of interest in
relation to the matters listed on this agenda. No substantive conflicts were identified.

6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS
Confirmed
6.1 The minutes of the meetings of 7 July 2011 and 5 October 2011.

7 MASTERS REPORT
Noted
7.1 Governors had recently taken part in a routine HEFCE assurance review seeking to assure
HEFCE that the College was exercising accountability for the public funding it received.
The review had confirmed that the College’s accountability processes and returns were
compliant.

7.2 The campaign for better loan repayment rules for part time student loans in the new fee
and funding system had been successful. The College’s part time students would repay
their loans after 4.5 years, making it possible for them to graduate before repaying. This
would allow Birkbeck to send a positive recruitment message to its prospective students.
7.3 The Governors congratulated the Master and other colleagues on the success of their lobbying efforts.

7.4 The next step in preparations for 2012-13 would be to work with the Student Loans Company (SLC) as well as UCAS and BIS in the implementation of the new system for part-time students.

7.5 The SLC was not yet well prepared to begin supplying student loans to part-time students. Applications for part-time student loans would not open until July 2012. The Master had met with the CEO of the SLC and had discussed the need to ensure SLC staff, who had not dealt with part-time students before, were knowledgeable about part-time student loans and in a position to advise enquirers.

7.6 If the SLC were not able to process part-time students loans in time for 2012-13, the College would consider allowing students to enroll before their loan was confirmed, based on the College’s initial assessment of their eligibility. There was a need to ensure that prospective students were not put off applying because of uncertainty about loan eligibility.

7.7 Governors noted that this could lead to cash flow issues. In addition, the fee/loan payments would be passed from SLC to the College in three termly instalments (25%, 25% and 50%) rather than monthly, as HEFCE funding was. The College had built up a large cash provision against this risk and was also evaluating the possibility of a borrowing facility to help manage potential cash flow problems.

7.8 The College had a strong communications strategy for prospective students including clear information on finance and loans. In addition, the College’s Director of External Relations was a member of the BIS communication strategy group.

7.9 The political campaign would move on to the mainstreaming of part-time and flexible higher education and the removal of artificial distinctions between full and part time.

7.10 If part-time flexible higher education did become more mainstream, there could be more competition for Birkbeck. However, Birkbeck’s research intensive peer institutions would be unlikely to move to teaching part time in the evening. Partnerships could be an option, but the College would need to be selective in choices and would focus on individual partnerships rather than mission groups.

8 NEXT STEPS FOR BIRKBECK

8.1 A report on the Next Steps projects (G 2011 01A)

8.2 Most of the projects were integral to the College’s strategy for the new fee and funding system.

8.3 The Enrolments 2.0 project would bring in a new application and enrolment process which would meet the new fee and funding system requirements, link seamlessly with loan and student finance applications and be user friendly for prospective students. The parallel Communication of New Fees and Finance project was developing the website and marketing communications to bring in and engage prospective students and give them essential information about student finance.
8.4 The **Birkbeck Association** would be a new offering, with a programme of events for its members. It was likely that Association members would also have opportunities to attend lectures that were also part of degree programmes, where there was space.

8.5 The College was required to put a link on its website to the **Key Information Set**. This was a pre-defined set of data about each degree course. Some of it was not relevant to Birkbeck, because it was geared to three year programmes for school leavers. The College would therefore be providing context and more information on its own website.

8.6 The **three term learning** project aimed to facilitate learning and teaching across all three terms, for programme teams that wished to use this pattern. Staff Governors noted that three term learning and teaching is already being carried out in some areas.

8.7 Members asked about indications from UCAS on Birkbeck’s recruitment to three year degrees. The numbers were up significantly compared with the previous year. The three year courses were likely to be a significant growth area for the College. However, the three year course student numbers were currently a small percentage of the overall numbers and the College was planning on the assumption that recruitment to four year undergraduate degrees would fall.

8.8 Governors noted the need for the College to monitor changes in the demographic distribution of students applying for 2012-13, in case the new system was deterring students from particular socioeconomic groups. This could have an impact on the College’s success in fulfilling its widening participation mission.

9 **BIRKBECK STRATFORD**

Received

9.1 A report on academic and building developments at Stratford *(G 2011 02)*

Noted

9.2 Good progress was being made on all fronts: joint governance and project management structures were in place; the building project had secured planning permission; the land lease had been agreed; the contractor had been appointed and was on site; fundraising work was ongoing; degree enrolment had increased; and outreach and student services initiatives were being developed further.

9.3 The formal opening of the building work, with a ceremonial ‘concrete pour’, had taken place at the site.

10 **STATEMENT OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Received

10.1 A note on the Statement of Primary Responsibilities with a recommendation on the use of the College Seal *(G 2011 08)*

Noted

10.2 The Statement of Primary Responsibilities outlined the responsibilities of the Governing Body, including responsibilities reserved for Governors and responsibilities delegated to committees.

10.3 An amendment was proposed to bring the use of the College Seal in line with current practice in the HE sector. Currently, its use was restricted to enacting resolutions of the
Governors. However, the seal was also required for routine legal documents relating to management and operations decisions.

10.4 Practice in some other universities was for the Seal to be in the custody of the Head of Administration with a requirement to report to the Governing Body on its use.

10.5 This would also require an amendment to the Standing Orders of the Governors, approval of which would require three weeks’ notice.

10.6 Five years had elapsed since the last Review of Governors’ Effectiveness. A working group would therefore be convened for the summer term, to review the effectiveness of the Governing Body and its documentation including the Statement of Primary Responsibilities and the Governance Handbook and Code of Conduct.

Agreed

10.7 To refer detailed consideration and confirmation of this proposal to the Audit Committee.

11 STUDENTS’ UNION

11.1 The Students’ Union was proposing changes to its Memorandum and Articles of Association, including membership of the Board of Trustees and the Union’s business and student voice committee structure. The proposals were being reviewed by the College’s solicitors.

11.2 It was noted that the current low participation of students in the Students’ Union had led to a few individuals performing multiple roles. Any constitutional changes should include safeguards against any problematic concentration of power among a few individuals.

Agreed

11.3 To approve changes to the Students’ Union constitution by email resolution if required before the next meeting.

12 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Received

12.1 The Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (G 2011 09)

Noted

12.2 The overall position was a £6.7M surplus, a considerable improvement since the mid-year review. This reflected increased income from tuition fees and reduced pay and non pay expenditure in the Schools and the professional services, in addition to several one off factors including higher than forecast investment returns, released provision for potential staff cost liabilities, a change in accruals practice (allocation of expenditure falling on the boundary between financial years), recharges from support service budgets to external grant budgets and a spend of £1.9M of the College’s SDF grant.

12.3 Discounting these one off factors, the underlying surplus was £3M.

12.4 Governors were pleased to note the soundness of current financial position. However they also noted that, as undergraduate numbers were expected to contract in the first years of the new fee and funding system, the College should take a prudent approach to further spending and avoid adding any recurrent spending commitments.
Approved, as recommended by F&GPC

12.5 Security Policy.

12.6 Retirement Policy.

13 AUDIT COMMITTEE
Received
13.1 The Report of the Audit Committee (G 2011 10)

14 ACADEMIC BOARD
Received
14.1 The Report of the Academic Board (G 2011 11)

Approved, as recommended by Academic Board

14.2 The conferment of the following Emeritus titles:

Emeritus Professor
Professor Michael Hunter

Emeritus Reader
Annie Jamieson

15 EQUALITIES COMMITTEE
Received
15.1 The Report of the Equalities Committee (G 2011 12)

Noted
15.2 The Single Equality Strategy and the Code of Practice on Disability in Employment had been updated to bring them in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Approved
15.3 The revised Single Equality Strategy

15.4 The revised Code of Practice on Disability in Employment.

16 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE
Received
16.1 The Report of the Remuneration Committee (G 2011 13)

Agreed
16.2 Revisions to the Committee’s procedure for consideration of pay awards for professorial and senior administrative staff as set out in G 2011 13.

17 ANNUAL RETURN TO HEFCE
Noted
17.1 This Governors meeting had originally been scheduled for 30 November 2012 and was postponed because of industrial and student protest action. To meet HEFCE’s deadlines for the annual accountability return by HE institutions, the following documents were agreed by Governors by email resolution

- Audit Committee annual report (G 2011 03),
- Financial statements (G 2011 04),
• Letter of representation (G 2011 05).
• Financial forecasts (G 2011 06)
• Annual monitoring statement (G 2011 07)

18 GOVERNOR LIAISON SCHEME
Received
18.1 A note on the Governors’ Liaison Scheme (G 2011 14)

Noted
18.2 Some Governors had positive feelings about the liaison scheme, and felt that having a link with a School or department had given good insight into the College. Other Governors did not feel that they had formed effective relationships through their School links.

18.3 Overall, the Governors’ view was that it was positive for the Schools to have contact with Governors and vice versa. It was agreed that the liaison scheme should focus on finding the most useful connections.

18.4 Other suggestions were made to strengthen links between Governors and the wider College, including tours of the College buildings and holding Governors meetings in different buildings.

19 THE BIRKBECK STATISTICS BOOK
Received
19.1 A report on numbers and trends in students, staff, finance and research (G 2011 15)

Noted
19.2 The data in the book would be published online and renewed annually.

19.3 A suggestion was made on the student age distribution report, to add a more detailed breakdown for students aged above 30.

19.4 The data showed that Birkbeck performed well on part time student retention compared with other universities. Governors suggested that this should be emphasized more in the College’s marketing.

20 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GOVERNING BODY
Noted
20.1 The membership of the Governing body for 2011-12.

21 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS
Resolved:
“that authority be granted to affix the Common Seal of the College to any deeds or documents necessary to give effect to the resolutions of the Governing Body at its present meeting.”

22 MEETING DATES
Noted
22.1 The dates of the remaining meetings this session:
   • Thursday 22 March 2012
   • Tuesday 3 July 2012